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Buildup by Soviets targets South Africa

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The Soviet Union's stepped-up military role in Angola against the forces of anti-Marxist guerrilla leader Jonas Savimbi was dramatized on Sept. 3.

On that date, Soviet First Lt. K. Kirov Vioroshilov, instructor of the Angolan Army's 8th Motorized Brigade, was killed during an attack on Kunyamba, Cuando-Cubango Province, in southeastern Angola.

Five other Soviet officers were wounded and two armored vehicles were destroyed in the incident, according to Portuguese news agency reports.

The accelerated Soviet involvement was detailed last Wednesday in a Washington Times dispatch from Johannesburg. Quoting intelligence sources, the report by correspondent Michael Sullivan said that for the first time in Angola's civil war, Soviet officers had taken direct control of the fighting at the battalion level and were coordinating armor, air, artillery, and ground troops against Mr. Savimbi's National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

"The tactics being used," wrote Mr. Sullivan, "while not new to Warsaw Pact countries, are new to the Angolan bush."

Commenting on the Times dispatch the following day, State Department spokesman Charles E. Redman said Soviet activities in Angola are "a matter of concern to the United States. It is important that the Soviet Union understand that such actions could have an effect on our relationship."

Mr. Redman, who declined to comment on the specifics of the Soviet activities, criticized Moscow's decade-long involvement in the conflict: "The Soviet role in Angola stands in sharp contrast to the role the United States is playing. We are seeking a peaceful negotiated settlement which would end the conflict in the region, the militarization of Angola's countryside and the presence of foreign troops in Angola. The Soviets are fueling that conflict."

The present Soviet-directed offensive against Mr. Savimbi's troops appears to have several goals. One is to keep the conflict going and reduce any inclination which factions in the Luanda gov-

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By Edward Neilan

ernment may have toward negotiating with Mr. Savimbi, whose movement is extremely popular with Angolans. Another is to apply pressure on the UNITA headquarters at Jamba and possibly force Mr. Savimbi's forces to flee. Such is the urgency the Soviets attach to blunting the military power of UNITA that they have introduced the HIND helicopter, MiG-23s, SU-22s and T-62 tanks.

A further goal is to increase pressure on the South African government in every way possible. It is evident that in the past several months Moscow has increased its South Africa-watching and subversion capabilities in all the countries of southern Africa.

The most recent link in the Soviet surveillance chain is the newly-appointed Soviet ambassador to tiny Lesotho. South African intelligence sources point out that the appointment of Vladimir Ivanovich Gavryuskin plus a staff of 27 is out of all proportion, since

Lesotho has no Soviet residents, very little trade and no other links with the Soviet Union. The new ambassador arrived recently along with several crates of

sophisticated electronic monitoring equipment.

Previously, the Soviet ambassador to Mozambique, Yuri Sepellov, served concurrently as Moscow's envoy in Lesotho's capital of Maseru.

Mr. Gavryuskin, 61, studied economics at Moscow University and is said to speak English well. His first overseas posting was from 1962 to 1968 to the Soviet Embassy in London, where he served as second secretary in the economic section. In 1968 he was one of 40 Soviet officials ordered out of the

country by the British Foreign Office. Mr. Gavryuskin subsequently was posted to the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa and then became consul general in Montreal. He was expelled from Canada in 1982, along with 17 other Soviet diplomats, on espionage charges.

Every Soviet embassy in southern Africa has been beefed-up in the last six months. In the Angolan capital of Luanda, Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Kalinin heads a staff of 45. The entire Soviet intelligence operation for southern Africa is controlled by the KGB and GRU from Luanda.

The Soviet Embassy staff in Harare, Zimbabwe, was recently increased from 17 to 65, and in Gaborone, Botswana, from 21 to 60. Ambassador Sepeliov, who was kicked out of Britain in 1971 for spying, heads a staff of 100 in Maputo, Mozambique. Until a few months ago, the staff there numbered only 35.

In Lusaka, Zambia, Ambassador V. Cherendik has a staff of 130 with a Red Army general as military attache. Mr. Cherendik has been identified by South African political commentator Stephan Terblanche as "a general in the KGB who has been expelled from three African countries."

Destabilization of South Africa's political and economic structure is a known aim of the Soviet Union, and Moscow is obviously increasing its manpower in the region to accomplish that mission.

Edward Neilan is foreign editor of The Times.